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youth groups
in conflict

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youth groups

in conflict

a report of a conference

compiled and written by

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From New England to the west coast and from the Canadian border to the Gulf reports come in to the Children's Bureau of new programs designed to reach youth in street clubs and gangs whose activities disrupt their communities. At the same time national organizations are being bombarded with questions and requests for help from communities. Through these pleas runs a common theme about how often traditional programs fail to enlist the interest of these young people and what the role of individual agencies should be in community efforts to control the spread of juvenile delinquency.

The demand for this *Conference on Youth Groups in Conflict* came from people struggling with programs for these youth groups. During the National Conference of Social Welfare in St. Louis in May 1956 about 50 street club workers, supervisors, executives, and welfare planners met together to discuss some of the problems they were facing in their communities. They urged the Children's Bureau to pull together information about the various projects in the country designed to reach hostile youth groups; to develop communication channels between individuals and agencies concerned with these groups; and to call a national conference to study current practice.

The Children's Bureau, after considering the proposals coming from this meeting, decided to call a national conference as a first step. The Bureau asked three national organizations concerned with hostile youth groups to help in planning and conducting the conference: the National Association of Social Workers, the National Social Welfare Assembly, and United Community Funds and Councils of America.

In November 1956, a planning and advisory committee, composed of a dozen experienced workers and community leaders, met for 2 days with representatives from the sponsoring organizations. This group recommended the conference focus, program content, schedule, and the dates May 14–17, 1957.

The Conference had many characteristics that should be heartening to everyone concerned with the problems of youth groups in conflict with their communities.

The collaboration of the Bureau with three national voluntary organizations created a happy blending of the interests and concerns of both public and voluntary agencies.

This was a working conference attended by almost 200 practitioners. Everyone contributed—in preparing for it and during its sessions. No one spoke from a pinnacle of authority but each person's remarks had an authoritative ring because they were based on first-hand experiences in real situations.

The participants did not leave the Conference with any illusion that they had come up with answers to all of the issues confronting them. They had no sense of having tied up the loose ends of even one specific problem. Furthermore they were convinced that much of the "learning" in the Conference could not be neatly summarized in terms of principles, techniques, goals, generalizations. The participants wanted to keep the ideas, facts, concepts coming out of their discussion as separate as they occurred so they might stay with them as important in their own right to the task of building bridges between hostile youth groups and the adult communities in which they live.

The Bureau is indebted to many people for this Conference— the planners, the speakers, the recorders, the resource people, the discussion leaders and the participants themselves. In a very real sense, they were the conference and the ideas presented here grew out of their rich background of experience.

The Bureau is especially grateful to Florence Ray of the National Association of Social Workers, Bernice Bridges of the National Social Welfare Assembly and Hollis Vick of United Community Funds and Councils of America for their cooperation and support throughout the Conference.

The problems of youth groups in conflict are so urgent—and the programs for them so new—that this report of this Conference has greater significance than most conference reports. Indeed, this report represents the first excursion into a complex and difficult area with which the Bureau will be deeply concerned in the years ahead.

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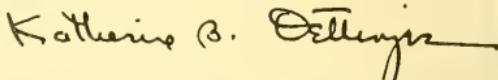
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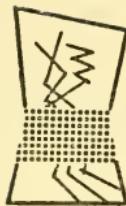
youth groups in conflict

a report of a conference

Amidst cries like *"This is a terrible thing!" "We can't let it happen again!" "Something must be done to stop it!"* and demands for action, most of the special reaching-out projects to youth groups in conflict began. Many of these projects, started in the past 15 to 20 years, were launched in the heat of public concern about a specific local incident involving crime and violence on the part of groups of teen-agers. Citizens called for quick action and were ready to pour out funds for anything that might make a dent in the problem. Because quick action was demanded, the public turned to the people who had traditionally worked with youth in groups—the youth-serving agencies.

Some of this violence was traced to members of self-formed and self-directed groups of young people in street clubs and youth gangs who did not and would not use the services of the established agencies like the Boy Scouts of America, the Young Men's Christian Association, settlement houses and neighborhood centers. Youth-serving agencies agreed to take on the assignment because they wanted to help in solving the problem. They were sincerely concerned about the youth they were *not* serving.

Often these were older adolescents and young adults who had dropped out of their programs in recent years. Efforts to reach these youth and bring them back into programs had not met with success. In part, agencies saw this as a symptom of unrest among young people and typical of the times since the last war. No one knew just how many of these unserved youth showed up later as statistics in the incidence of delinquency but some of them did, without doubt.

Programs that have been initiated to reach out and serve groups of hostile, aggressive youth have stimulated agencies to think more creatively and develop new approaches for extending services to all older adolescents and young adults. On some points agencies have

reached conclusions that would eventually affect their whole program. For instance, simply saying that services are open to all people within a certain age range and living within a geographical area does not mean that they will be used by the people who need them most. Just as special effort and sensitivity are required to encourage certain ethnic groups to feel that they are welcome in established programs, so agencies must use imagination and ingenuity if they are to reach and serve older adolescents. Furthermore challenging programs for today's youth cannot be a rehash of what interested the same age group yesterday. Programs must be fresh, exciting, and geared to the second half of the twentieth century.

Gaps in current information and areas requiring further study and experimentation show up in the unanswered questions that are plaguing practitioners, executives, and social planners. They ask: Is it possible for agencies to serve "easy-to-serve" youth and still move out to work with "hard-to-serve" young people? Can both types be served under the same roof? Does serving one group eliminate serving the other? Will the community support expanded services? What kind of training and experience are required of staff members who work with "hard-to-serve" youth? Is this service a short-term demonstration program or will communities and agencies have to plan to continue such services for a long time?

Matching these questions are statements that run like this: The roots of juvenile delinquency penetrate all aspects of community life. Youth groups who are in conflict with their communities represent just one aspect of a larger and more serious community situation. An all-out attack on such problems as inadequate housing, insufficient employment, lack of services to hard-to-serve families and individuals must accompany the efforts of youth serving agencies. Within an area-wide or city-wide plan integrating a variety of services to meet a variety of social problems, programs for hostile, aggressive youth can fit into place most effectively. Furthermore, some agencies must continue to serve youth who are not in difficulty because serving such youth is also an important part of maintaining community health and preparing youth to take their proper places in adult society.

An appreciation of the importance of closer collaboration between sociology and social services has been an important result of the experimentation and ferment in communities around the country during the past decade or so. Sociologists have been studying youth gangs and delinquent subcultures for a long time. But redirecting group and individual behavior in gang life as a conscious attack on delinquency is much newer. The conference planning committee felt that this was the time to bring sociologists and social workers together in the hope that their combined knowledge and experience could be used to the benefit of future programs of youth serving organizations.

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Thus the committee believed that the conference should focus on a study of current practice in providing services to self-directed, culturally-alienated groups of hostile, aggressive youth. The objectives were:

1. To present basic information and working concepts useful in examining practice.

2. To review and study work patterns and practice problems in current experience.

3. To develop suggestions for sound practice.

The conference opened on May 14, 1957. At the first three general sessions, speakers covered basic knowledge on the following subjects:

Youth Subcultures in American Society

The Nature of Hard-to-Serve Groups

Objectives of the Service.

After each address, the conference participants met in small working groups to consider the content given by the speakers in the light of their own experiences and the conference objectives. The same groups met for three additional sessions to discuss: (1) The nature of the service; (2) methods of work and the worker; (3) administration of the service. The conference ended with a presentation of some highlights of the sessions and the possible scope of future efforts.

In the course of the conference the participants developed an amazing degree of mutual trust and respect which freed them to discuss problems and to talk about their frustrations and fears. As one leader of a working group said, "This has been almost a spiritual experience. I wish I could take the members of our group home to help us work out problems there."

Ideas tumbled over each other during working group sessions because the participants came with such rich backgrounds of experience. The leaders of the seven working groups found that their roles of stimulating discussion were reversed and instead, they were more like referees as they called signals and tried to keep the discussion focused on the conference objectives. This was no "little league" game though, and it was not long before the participants settled into disciplined, serious teamwork. Although the first evening's sessions were like scrimmage practices, by the morning of the first full day of the conference the players knew their positions.

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Conference sessions were exciting and this has made reporting them difficult. In an effort to reflect the "sense" of the Conference, the ideas and concepts of the speakers have been merged with the contributions of the conferees around the six major topics considered by the Conference.
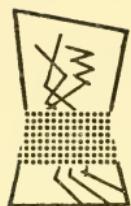
youth subcultures

in american society

The game of "Who is on Top?" is played by adolescents and adults on a field as big as the world. Usually the game is fun and the competition friendly but when playing gets rough some kind of intervention is needed. Street club workers with groups of hostile youth often find themselves in the role of referee in this game. Yet they are not always prepared for these roles. They are adults themselves and understanding of why youth groups feel so competitive and act out their feelings with occasional violence does not come easy.

One of the objectives of this conference was to provide basic information and working concepts to help these workers to examine their practice. Staff members of youth-serving agencies are quite familiar with information about personality development and the dynamics of human behavior and they are accustomed to using psychiatric concepts to guide them in their work with all youth. They are less familiar with some sociological concepts—especially those derived from studies of community cultures and subcultures. Practitioners have raised questions that show their interest and concern about how their understanding and practice might be improved through learning more about the cultural factors that sociologists see as contributing to the alienation of some youth from traditional programs. The conference planners asked a sociologist, Dr. Albert K. Cohen, a member of the University of Indiana faculty and author of the book, *Delinquent Boys—The Culture of the Gang*,[1] to speak at the opening general session on youth subcultures in American society.

Most of the things people do are attempts to solve problems of adjustment, Dr. Cohen pointed out. "These problems are mostly problems in human relationships, first, because the goals, values and self-conceptions which we seek to achieve and to maintain are defined

[1] Albert Cohen : *Delinquent Boys—The Culture of the Gang.* Glencoe, Illinois. The Free Press, 1955. 198 pp.

largely in terms of relationships to others and positions in groups; and second, because the obstacles and impediments to their realization consist largely of attitudes, expectations, and other properties of the group environment." Sometimes cultural conflicts exist but, viewed in perspective, all of these experiences are necessary in answering such basic questions of human life as: Who am I? Where do I fit in? Can I belong? What do other people expect of me? During the process of growing up, we all ask these questions verbally and through our behavior and we don't stop asking until we get satisfactory answers that make sense to us. When an individual does not find answers within the framework of the culture he may:

1. Continue to conform and to tolerate a certain amount of frustration, rather than invite new problems by alienating himself from his groups.

2. Seek out and transfer his allegiance to other groups whose cultures provide more effective and, within those groups, socially acceptable solutions.

3. Join with other people who have similar problems of adjustment, and, through interaction with these people, generate new subcultures in whose approved ways are tailor-made solutions to the problems of adjustment shared by their members.

Youth groups in conflict with society are made up of young people who are dissatisfied and frustrated with what they see as ways to achieve happiness within the framework of their communities. Dr. Cohen advanced the concept that subcultures are group-created adjustments to strains generated by the larger social system. Since no one standard delinquent subculture exists, participants were asked to recall and define the types with which they are familiar.

In the sessions of the working groups that followed Dr. Cohen's presentation, the concept of subcultures was touched upon but, in general, did not receive very full discussion. This may have been due, in part, to the conferees unfamiliarity with the idea and to a need to digest the importance of what Dr. Cohen had said. There was agreement, though, that the concept of group-created adjustments to societal strains added a new dimension to the analysis of why conflict groups form. The conference members were familiar with the idea of the compulsive delinquent individual and the habitual offender and they began to recognize a third type—the situational delinquent. They could see that in the future there was need for learning more about which type they dealt with and how this might affect the kinds of service required.

The conferees gave much more attention to another aspect of Dr. Cohen's paper in which delinquency was described as an act of class protest. He spoke of two social classes, working class and middle class, and described delinquency as a response to status problems associated with the male working-class role in our predominantly middle-class society. "These standards emphasize such things as individual responsibility, the acquisition of skills of academic and economic value, manners and courtesy, the 'constructive' use of leisure, self-discipline and the inhibition of spontaneity," Dr. Cohen, said. "Working-class socialization, on the whole, is less likely to produce young people with the ability to do well in these terms. When he moves into the world outside the home, and especially the school, where he is compared with middle-class children, the working-class child tends to sink to the 'bottom of the heap.' Our 'democratic' ethic itself works against him for, whereas it implies that recognition and reward are available to all who can meet the standards, it implies also that everyone is to be measured by the same standards."

Although the conference participants did not accept Dr. Cohen's terminology of "working-class" and "middle-class," they recognized that the members of the groups they serve did have the sense of rejection and futility which he described. They went on to say that working class is a misnomer today if it is to be contrasted with middle-class. Most everyone works, lower, middle and upper classes except in cases of severe unemployment and extreme wealth. They felt that the value systems in whatever class structure exists in America are more important conflict-producing elements than economic factors.

They recognized that the delinquency they encounter fits the characteristics that Dr. Cohen described as nonutilitarian, malicious, and negatavistic. They agreed that it seems to derive its quality of being fun from the very fact that it is forbidden. However they had some question about his remark, "What the delinquent does is not merely right by his standards; it is right because it is wrong by conventional standards." They felt that there is a good deal of confusion about what is right and what is wrong. As a society we have not fully decided what behavior is acceptable and what is not. We don't know what values we are trying to get youngsters to accept. The children, themselves, are not sure either.

By the nature of their origins, purposes and programs, youth-serving agencies have reflected middle-class values. For years they have operated on the principle that their programs are important in helping young people prepare themselves for adulthood. Youth's participation in them fills their leisure time with wholesome activities and many other opportunities for social adjustment and growth. Communities have supported these youth services on these premises

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for close to a century, believed in them, and wanted them available to as many youth as possible. Yet the origins, purposes and programs of these agencies have tended to reflect middle-class values. Methods of "teaching" or transmitting ethical codes have been adapted to fit changing community emphases over the years. Perhaps, in the process of keeping up with changing times, agencies have favored program adaptation over helping youth to understand the inconsistencies in adult behavior that they encounter from day to day. These inconsistencies pose serious problems for all youth. Many opportunities for them to raise questions, air their opinions and discuss their observations objectively must be provided. This may well be the most important contribution that youth-serving agencies can make in helping young people to grow up and adjust to adult society as it really is. Too often the agencies have coasted along on the surface of things, using outdated knowledge of the culture in the community to guide them.

Groups of frustrated, confused youth direct their hostility towards institutions that they see as symbols of the society. Perhaps they may have had some past association with these institutions but, because of their behavior, have been asked to leave. In other instances they are so alienated from society that its symbols do not interest them at all. In some instances, these symbols actually repel them and they withdraw. Indeed these groups may not be as hard to reach as they are hard to serve.

To the youth, themselves, the tables seem turned. It is society and its institutions that are hard to reach. The real question is how can society and its institutions be most easily accessible and in tune with the needs of these youth. Answers to this question are sought not because the number of youth involved is so great but because their problems are pressing and hard for communities to live with.

A sense of "neighborhood," of being close to the forces that are at work in the immediate life of the community, is a prerequisite for agencies in helping such youth. Coupled with this feeling of intimacy with the community must be a philosophy that attacking and correcting adverse neighborhood conditions is as important a function as providing program services. The social settlement movement is based on this combination of "feeling with" and "acting with" the local community. Perhaps this explains why settlements and neighborhood centers were in the vanguard in making themselves easier to reach by sending staff members into the neighborhood to contact and establish relationships with hostile youth groups. Other agencies have developed plans to extend their services too.

But once agencies have contacted these groups and have established relationships with them, their next steps have not been so well

defined. What the worker does in and through and with the groups is not fully documented. Goals are unclear. Is it to bring the groups back into the agencies? Is it to try to close the breach between these groups and the community and to work with them in building bridges between themselves and the adult culture in their communities?

Experimental projects in recent years have uncovered information about the nature and variety of these groups and youth-serving agencies have concluded that there are some types of groups that they can serve effectively while others have such serious problems that real doubts exist about the usefulness of these agencies attempting to work with them. Much depends on the nature of the groups themselves.
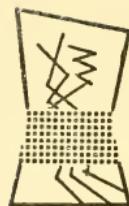
*the nature
of the groups*

Agencies use a variety of terms in describing the antisocial groups they are attempting to serve. Hard-to-reach is the term most commonly used. Street clubs is another popular name which connotes where the groups hang out and where the adult workers contact them. The term, youth gang, is used less often by professional workers and youth themselves even though the press uses it rather consistently— perhaps because the term is descriptive and dramatic.

Practitioners have expressed a real need for a clarification of these terms. Such a clarification would help them communicate with each other more satisfactorily and do a better job of interpreting to the public. The reality and importance of clear terms was substantiated by reading the reports of various current projects around the country. Obviously from these reports a wide variety of groups was being served and most of these did not possess strong delinquent tendencies.

The nature of group life

Intimate group association with peers is a primary need during adolescence and a common human need throughout life. During the teens when young people are beginning to count less on family and more on persons of their own age group, this need becomes especially urgent. For these young people belonging to a group whose activities have meaning for them as individuals, having a place in such a group where their participation is important to others, feeling they are wanted and needed is exciting and also basic to their mental health. Under healthy conditions these associations provide a very necessary laboratory for developing skills in social adjustment.

Every group has a structure for leadership and a code of ethics in addition to a reason or set of reasons for its formation. What happens to the members through their associations determines whether or not the experience is constructive. When the group develops out

of protest and even attack on the established culture, belonging to it may not be healthful or conducive to social adjustment. Do the same personal satisfactions result? Are the same processes in operation? The answer is yes and no.

The satisfactions of belonging may be there. The pleasures of joint action may be present. But, when the reasons behind group formation come from a sense of rejection, frustration, and dissatisfaction on the part of members and the leadership is despotic, negative values far outweigh the positive. The experience is likely to become preparation for revolt rather than for developing skills in social adjustment. The code of conduct—the value system—may be satisfying to a member at first but, if he wishes to withdraw, he may not be able to do so. He is a captive to the internal leadership of the group. Fear of retaliation prevents him from moving out of the group.

Many of the groups that are contacted and served by workers in the projects around the country have some or all of these characteristics. Few, though, are completely oriented toward delinquency. Actually there is a wide range in the degree of conflict and alienation among the variety of groups that is being served. Workers have found that most of the groups are fairly easy to reach but hard to serve.

But what should youth-serving agencies know about such groups in deciding which ones should receive the limited amount of staff leadership that is available? How can a diagnosis be made of these groups? Is there a point in the degree of cultural alienation and delinquency that determines which groups can use services effectively?

Mrs. Elliot Studt, then Chief of the Training Branch in the Division of Juvenile Delinquency Service of the Bureau, at the second general session suggested a framework for analyzing the group associations existing within or close to the delinquent subculture. Admittedly agencies do not know or reach all the groups within the delinquent subculture that could use their services. Certain group orientations in this segment of our youth may be better reached by one or another pattern of services. Mrs. Studt urged the conference members to develop descriptions of the variety of groups within the delinquent subculture and the corresponding techniques that work best with what groups.

People who work with groups are accustomed to analyzing them on the basis of certain factors in the life of the group. What are the program interests? Who are the indigenous leaders? Does the leadership role shift according to the ascendency of certain program interests and activities? Are there subgroups and, if so, on what basis have they been formed? Do these constellations break up and reform periodically and, if so, does a pattern emerge? In other words,

does one activity produce a specific pattern and another a different one? These and many more questions confront the group worker as he tries to know his groups and develop plans for using himself to the greatest advantage.

Diagnosing groups in the delinquent subculture

Mrs. Studt proposed six dimensions which could be used for diagnosing groups that are in or bordering on the delinquent subculture.

1. *The kinds of individuals in the groups*

What are the motivations of the individuals for group participation? If, as Mrs. Studt suspected, most of the individuals are socially and personally handicapped in terms of mental and social health, this, in itself, becomes a basic factor in working with the groups. We have to provide learning experiences that will assist in developing social skills which are taken for granted by youth groups in which the members are more advantaged. To illustrate her point she described three categories of socially handicapped individuals whose presence had been noted in reports of current programs.

a. The youth who has no other peer group from which he can gain the satisfaction of fun, fellowship, and status. Such young people come from families that have not been able to give them the "have" base for such satisfactions. This, coupled with the usual adolescent needs, forces these youth to use peer groups to meet a wide gamut of emotional needs.

b. If the leadership in these groups or a large proportion of the members are self-identified delinquents who are using the group to implement their own antisocial drives, the group worker has different demands upon himself and his skills than he does in serving other youth groups.

c. If the group contains a sizeable number of severely damaged personalities who are unable to move into more advanced social activity—who may, in fact, move in the direction of the more isolated and withdrawn adjustment of the habitual drug user—the objectives of the program and the goals of the worker become very different.

Mrs. Studt believed that the chances for success in helping members of hostile youth groups by a direct approach will

be greatest in the first category. The other two classifications may require other social provisions.

2. *Correctional history of the individuals*

Individual histories are essential if the group worker is to understand the personal needs of the members. Reports reveal that many members of these groups have been subjected to all kinds of social and personal trauma. They come from families that have been difficulty-prone; each difficulty befalling the family becomes a catastrophe. This illustrates the importance of mobilizing all sorts of basic services because otherwise, symptoms are treated rather than the real problem. In addition, it is imperative that the group worker know and understand the correctional history of the group members, what this has meant to them, and how these youth perceive themselves and their place in society. The history will also disclose something of how the individual perceives society and its institutions. Furthermore, it will tell a lot about how he may use this new group experience because of his past associations and help the group worker to provide the members with re-educative experiences with representatives of law enforcement, corrections, and other community institutions.

3. *The delinquent orientation of the groups*

It is just as important to learn how the group perceives itself and if it is oriented towards delinquency. This can be determined by studying the prestige structure within the group. If the prestige structure is such that status is conferred upon individuals and cliques on the basis of occasional delinquent or antisocial acts that is one thing. If, on the other hand, status is achieved only by individuals who can organize the rest of the group for delinquent attacks on the community, this is a symptom of the seriousness of the group's alienation from the community. This type of information is lacking in the literature now available and yet it is imperative to the job of describing and classifying the kinds of groups for which we have concern.

4. *The degree of organization of the group*

More needs to be known about the degree of organization of the groups who participate in delinquent behavior. The typology described by Peter Scott in a recent article *Gangs*

and Delinquent Groups in London [2] is useful in this connection. Street clubs and youth gangs are (a) associations for meeting peer needs that may never become delinquent; (b) casual and fleeting delinquent associations; groups of friends and siblings for whom delinquent acts are only an occasional aspect of their activity; (c) loose collections of antisocial individuals who are not capable of group cohesiveness but whose activities are careless consequences and apt to be delinquent; (d) gangs with defined leadership and all the accoutrements of group identity—a hang out—a name—and a clear power structure. A clearer definition of the various types of hostile youth groups would not only help the workers but would be of value to the public and to the youth themselves. Stereotyping is always risky but in this case, can be dangerous because adolescents, in their efforts to gain prestige and status, may seek to become what they do not really want to be.

Two other points about internal organization were also mentioned. One centered around the fluidity of relationships within the groups. Through the excitement and contagion of a proposed delinquent act, a subgroup may coalesce. Probation officers see this often and they report that, at another time, although a portion of the original group may remain, the fringe members are different. What this tells us about the structure of the groups is important. The second point relates to how much change in organization and leadership is required if a delinquent gang is to be moved toward a democratic goal. If the power structure in a group tends to be fascist, how can a democratic impact be achieved?

5. *Perception of the community by the groups*

It is extremely important for workers with youth groups in or bordering on delinquent subcultures to find out what the community means to these groups. Such information is crucial in setting service goals which so often include helping these youth groups to establish sound, healthy relationships within the community. Do these young people see certain elements in the community as actively frustrating their group goals? Do they see other elements as neutral or capable of being neutralized?

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[2] Peter Scott: Gangs and Delinquent Groups in London. **British Journal of Delinquency**, 1956, 7, 4–26 (July).

Both the literature and workers' reports indicate that hostile youth groups tend to categorize adult groups in the community in three ways:

a. They perceive certain adult groups as adult forms of their own peer groups. Adult sports clubs with their interest in gambling, political clubs, and the organized criminal gangs become models for their own groups, if these prevail in their communities.

b. Certain official groups such as law enforcement and correctional personnel are perceived as frustrating these youth groups in achieving their particular goals.

c. Social agencies, schools, churches and recreation services are seen by these youth groups as the neutral or to be neutralized segment of community culture. The youth think of them as negligible forces, to be duped if possible; the workers think of these organizations as potential resources to aid these youth. This gap between how the workers and the hostile youth view these institutions is very difficult to bridge.

The worker must discover just how a specific youth group perceives the community and then determine how he can help the members to modify their attitudes in the direction of social goals.

6. *The community's perception of the youth groups*

This dimension is a corollary to the previous one. It not only carries a challenge to the worker for learning as much as possible about the community in which he is working but it broadens his operational base, too. He will have to determine if certain segments of the adult community see youth groups as recruiting grounds for eventual participation in adult antisocial activities. If this proves to be the case, does he extend his role to the point of helping to neutralize these destructive forces in order to assure a greater measure of success in his socializing work with the youth groups?

On the other hand, if these youth groups view the organization to which the worker looks for help as only worthy of scorn or exploitation, will it be necessary for him to help these community institutions to see where they have failed these groups and what can be done to restore their confidence?

Every community has institutions or organizations with legal responsibility for working with the kinds of groups we have been talking about. Often law enforcement and correctional agencies have felt that they had primary and even exclusive jurisdiction. How much do they know about these new efforts to serve the youth for whom they have long been concerned? If they knew more might they not welcome cooperative work on behalf of youth and the larger community?

Mrs. Studt closed her presentation by saying that she had endeavored to extend our understanding beyond the confines of seeing one youth group as an entity. Instead we should examine a constellation of relationships which contribute to a diagnosis of problems. On the basis of such a diagnosis, she could foresee the possibility of developing differentiated plans for attacking specific types of problems and eventually a total community strategy for reaching the hard-to-reach in the delinquent subculture.

No question was raised about the importance and validity of determining service methods on the basis of facts about group life. The participants recognized from their own experiences that they have been dealing with youth groups whose range of alienation from the major culture varied widely. But the first category of groups whose delinquency is only occasional represents the type with which they are most familiar since many such groups are already active participants in existing programs of youth-serving agencies. Here the problems center around how to keep the members associated with the programs. For groups of this type that are not being served, little more is required than contacting them and helping them to become affiliated with current services. To do this requires time and reaching-out but it is by far the easiest and simplest aspect of the job.

Agencies have to study their current methods of policy making and programming if they are to be successful in holding the interest of these groups. Often young people are capable of assuming far more responsibility than agencies customarily give them. They need to have confidence that their membership in the agency program means that they have significant roles to play in it, that they will be vitally involved in helping to solve problems that fall within the range of their understanding and ability, that their ideas will be heard and their wishes considered in connection with the selection of program activities. Then too, they need to have a sense that their experience in the agency is preparing them to assume significant roles in the larger society and the adult community.

The second category of youth groups whose individual members

and cliques indulge in delinquencies more often, but are not yet crystallized into antisocial aggressive subcultures are "naturals" for the type of service now offered by the special reaching-out programs in agencies around the country. These groups require intensive service which should be an extension of the traditional programs. However, the prognosis for such groups will be hopeful only if the worker is skillful and has freedom enough to function flexibly and at a pace that is in keeping with the ability of the group to move towards social adjustment.

Groups whose behavior has crystallized into delinquent patterns and whose members include a high proportion of individuals with severely damaged personalities make up the third category. With such groups the conference people had had very little experience and they questioned the effectiveness of any service they were equipped to provide. They saw these groups in a rather hopeless light, with treatment needs beyond the usual group work methods. In these groups the bond is usually based on warfare and fear rather than on mutual interests and healthy motivations. The internal organization is tight, controlling, and dictatorial. In fact the whole situation is pathological and requires specialized treatment.

The conferees were in agreement that they needed to know more about the kinds of individuals in the groups they serve—not only the social and personal trauma the youth have suffered, but also their correctional histories. Workers have less experience in gathering knowledge on the latter point, perhaps because they have been more concerned about social problems and also somewhat isolated from correctional personnel.

In addition to diagnosis of the individuals, the worker should improve his skills in diagnosing the delinquent orientation of individuals and cliques and the status structure within such groups. All attempts of this sort should be fully recorded since current recording on this subject is fragmentary. Too often the worker instead of recording this fully carries much of this knowledge in his mind and uses it as occasion demands.

Participants discussed with considerable heat the last two dimensions for diagnosis suggested by Mrs. Studt—the groups' perception of the community and conversely, the community's preception of the groups. These are basic to any setting of goals and plans for treatment. Members suspected that the worker often tries to handle the group's hostility without handling the cause. They spoke freely about the fact that they are more comfortable and skilled in handling hostile behavior than they are in correcting the conditions which produce it. Because of this, workers often welcome being detached from the agency. The freedom this gives them to work without hindrance in the atmosphere of the street corner is very rewarding.

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The methods used in many building-centered programs seem to be at odds with sound attitudes towards helping children vulnerable to delinquency. Without a basic change in attitudes the workers doubted whether or not it would ever be possible for an agency to provide effective service, even on an extension basis.

Most adolescents do not feel that their participation in society is satisfying. Our culture is not structured so that teen-agers can gain status and prestige in socially acceptable ways. They feel "declassed." The conferees went on to discuss the way this problem is revealed in middle-sized and small communities in comparison to large metropolitan centers. They agreed that the young people revolt against the community in different ways depending on the size and complexity of a community. In small communities, tensions are fewer and less severe; social life is more intimate and less complex; family life is stronger and patterns of inter-family association are different than in urban areas. The value systems vary too but adolescents in the small community find challenging roles. However, when frustrations occur and rebellion follows, the types of delinquent behavior are the same as in the large community. The differences are in degree rather than in type of offense.

The participants were not clear about the point at which youthful behavior goes beyond "normal adolescent rebellion" and becomes "delinquent." This is due, in part, to the fuzziness of adult value systems. Unfortunately the adult community becomes interested and concerned with adolescent behavior only when it is deviant enough to be noted publicly and produces a bad name for the community. This concept ties in with the oft-quoted phrase, "Anything you do is O. K., if you can get away with it." Adolescents are quick to pick up any flaw in the adult value system and exploit it. They use these inconsistencies to justify their actions and put adults on the defensive.

The representatives of law enforcement agencies among the conferees were very helpful at this point. They explained the philosophy behind our laws which reflect the value systems of our culture. They expressed a real desire to work cooperatively with social workers and everyone else interested in the welfare of youth and the total community. They recognized that any defection on the part of adults contributes to the basic difficulties of adolescent adjustment. Teen-agers use adult behavior as measuring rods for their own actions. They become disillusioned when they find defects in their idols and sometimes turn to criminals for their models.

Understanding the problems of youth from this vantage point helps agencies to set their objectives for services to hostile youth groups.

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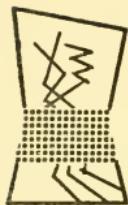
objectives
of the service

The conference participants had looked at the complexity of the problems to be tackled and the hoplessness of arriving at any clear-cut solutions without careful study of each phase of service. They were almost catapulated into a consideration of objectives. Are there short-range goals of service to hard-to-reach groups of youth? Did these overshadow long-range objectives? Could services be planned that would meet both short- and long-range objectives? The conference participants had definite ideas and wanted to share them.

At this point Mr. David M. Austin, formerly the director of the Roxbury Special Youth Program and, currently, the executive secretary of the Group Work Council of the Cleveland Welfare Federation, presented a paper at the third general session of the conference on the goals or objectives for services.

Mr. Austin pointed out that the service to hard-to-reach groups is designed and offered in a different manner than the programs of traditional youth-serving agencies. The service begins where the need is greatest and is not dependent upon the client's request. It is an assertive, even aggressive service which starts with a community problem and is provided outside of institutional walls. It is dependent for success or failure on the skills and judgment of the individual worker. The worker may seem to be a lone operator but is in fact, essentially a part of a team of concerned adults from whom he gains support, guidance, and perspective. He said:

> "Putting all of these essential elements together then, we have a nonmembership, community located, professional service provided through a single worker who works in an environmental situation over which he has limited control and who extends service to a group without a prior request from them for service."

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Again, partly because of the confusion which shows up in variety of approaches in the projects under study, and partly because of his intimate knowledge of the problems uncovered by workers and planners, Mr. Austin began by describing certain inappropriate goals. One of the inappropriate goals "which has been and still is used by organizations in setting up such a service, is that of recruiting more members for a membership program. It is quite appropriate for a membership agency to experiment with various ways of publicizing and interpreting its program to young people who have not yet chosen to come to the agency. It is also appropriate to expect street corner groups to move to the point of using formal community facilities and even paying a fee for their use if it is required—in fact they may use the facilities in several organizations. But to initiate a service to a group because they need a service and then to justify it and measure its success by the rapidity with which the group moves indoors into the agency building is being unfair both to the group and the service."

Another inappropriate goal that Mr. Austin said was sometimes assigned to a street corner group work service by some adult groups in the community is that of doing undercover work to detect or to solve or to anticipate criminal actions. Although it is appropriate for group leaders, at their discretion, to share information with the police about major acts of violence or the acts of adults who encourage delinquency, "to create a service in order to gain information or to measure its effectiveness by the amount of information supplied is unsound."

What is, in fact, the central goal in this type of service? The delinquent behavior of members of a street corner group grows out of a network of individual and group forces including patterns of group values. Consequently the goal of the group worker is to modify these forces in such a way that major law violations and socially disapproved behavior on the part of the members will occur less frequently and community approved and supported behavior, more frequently. Such changes in the forces within the group will take place over a period of time and they will affect various individuals in the group. Perhaps even a larger goal can be suggested: the modification of forces within a group in the adolescent community in such a way that the general community pattern of adolescent values is affected. In turn as the pre-adolescent and adolescent, over a period of time pattern their behavior after more acceptable models less delinquency occurs.

The conferees agreed that the basic premise back of offering service to hostile youth groups is a belief in an innate tendency of human beings toward health and productive social functioning even on the part of our ostensibly "separated" youth. Youth in conflict

want to change; they want to be participating members of the general culture. Efforts designed to help them to achieve such personal and social goals, cannot omit consideration of the unhealthy and conflicting conditions in the broad community which contribute to their delinquency. These must be attacked too—both in terms of the agency's philosophy and approach and the implications of the worker's activities with the group itself. This involves two approaches: a broad service which deals with the social forces and context within which delinquent behavior develops and a direct attempt to alleviate the incidence and severity of delinquent acts committed by adolescents. In both instances short-range and long-range goals must be defined:

SHORT-RANGE GOALS

for the youth groups

To reduce the severity and frequency of offenses, i.e. gang warfare, murder, theft.

To redirect behavior into more socialized channels.

To develop relationships with persons and institutions that will support the principle that individuals have an inherent healthy desire for status and prestige in society.

To help adolescents make use of community resources that are available to them.

for the community

To create productive, satisfactory communication channels between youth and the adult community.

To locate conflict-producing elements in community life.

To secure cooperation in alleviating these situations.

To locate gaps in service.

To launch planning that will lead to filling these gaps.

LONG-RANGE GOALS

for the youth groups

To help youth to develop trust in adults and the major culture.

To help them understand the consequences of their antisocial acts and promote a desire to become a part of society.

for the community

To work out strategy for attacking community situations that produce delinquent behavior.

To create opportunities for youth to assume progressively more significant roles in society.

To help them understand the nature of society—how culture develops and how it can be changed without violence.	To secure services to fill existing gaps.

The attack on the problems in youth subcultures and in the major culture must be simultaneous although the pace at which change takes place will vary according to specific conditions in a particular community. Goals and service patterns would differ in emphasis according to the needs and culture of different communities.
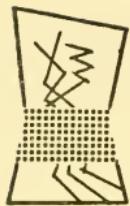
Although the conferees had been tempted to pull apart the ideas presented by the three speakers, now they sensed the importance of putting strands of thought together again. They were fairly clear about the problem; they were pretty sure of the identity of the consumer, and they knew why something was needed. But just what the something was was not too clear. What was the nature of the product? What processes had gone into its production and what were the methods that worked best?

Here was the thread of careful, deliberate planning which had to come first. There was the strand that represented honest communication—the public, law enforcement officials, social agencies—between everyone concerned, recognition that the service was not a cure-all but rather part of a much larger treatment program. Here was the cord of conviction that the core of the service had to relate youth to the mainstream of community life. This thread represented the professional service rendered in and to the community by a worker whose skill and judgment were crucial factors in assuring success. Another strand represented the objectives determined in the beginning and a plan for evaluation developed at the same time. Another one stood for the conviction that the stage of experimentation and demonstration had passed and services must be designed to correct the conditions that had created the problem—We are "playing for keeps not putting out a fire."

Next, the conference participants looked at the basic pattern for the service. Here they used the working brief prepared by staff members of the Neighborhood Service Organization in Detroit.

The working groups elaborated on the process of preparing the worker for his job saying that though the worker may appear to be alone and completely on his own, he is, in fact, or should be supported by his agency and other organizations and programs in the community. This does not happen without prior planning on the part

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of the sponsoring agency; area-wide or city-wide clearance with other supportive programs such as the schools, public and voluntary social agencies, churches, business organizations and, very important to the whole effort, official agencies such as the police, the juvenile court and probation office. Of course, if psychological and psychiatric treatment services are available they should be included, too.

The worker needs the assistance that he can only receive from regular supervisory conferences. In addition, plans should be made for him to meet regularly with representatives of the supportive agencies. The conference participants noted that what the worker needs is more easily available when a community-wide or area-wide system of services has been planned from a central source such as a community welfare council. The very best kind of plan falls down without adequate implementation and constant study of day-to-day operational problems. Workers should be clear that they are representatives of the sponsoring agencies and that they should so identify themselves to everyone concerned with the service—supporting services, community leaders, and the youth groups themselves.

Becoming acquainted with the group's haunts and the larger neighborhood is part of the worker's preparation. He may learn of X Group through referrals from law enforcement agencies, social agencies, neighborhood institutions, or private citizens. Or he may hear about Y Group through vague descriptions and hints of its activities and, through his own initiative, he tries to locate it. Or a group may make a self-referral to him. Perhaps an agency has been working with easier-to-serve groups for a period of time, and this leads to unserved groups asking for leadership or service. Such groups may see this as a way to gain status. In some instances groups wishing to change their individual and group behavior, may seek out street club workers and say, "Be our leader. You can help us stay out of trouble and that is what we want."

Once the worker is sure of the support of his employing agency; knows his role in relation to the total services of the agency and other programs in the community; has learned something about the group or groups he is to work with; has some understanding of the milieu in which these groups exist; and knows a few of the key members of the group, what comes next?

The worker begins to observe and assess a number of important things. He notes the behavior of individual members and the group; he discovers maladjustments and points of internal conflict together with signs that indicate value systems and sources of conflict with the community.

Concurrent with these observations, he starts to establish contacts with the group members, individually and collectively. He identifies himself as a representative of his agency and tries to relieve

curiosity about himself and his role. He tries to define his role for the group and sets certain limits about what can be expected of him while he offers services that may be interesting to the members.

Verbalization of interest is not enough. The worker must be prepared to give other evidence of his concern for the members. Obvious, concrete and immediate help are essential. This may mean accompanying members of the group to court or jail, locating a job for them or intervening on their behalf in a variety of situations, at home, at school, and in the community. Although the worker has developed a plan of approach and a set of objectives, he must give the impression of spontaneity and adaptability. It is futile to talk to the members about what may happen in the future. To them *NOW* is of paramount importance.

Often the group is hostile, and the worker's sincerity is constantly tested. He must be able to accept this behavior on the basis of understanding its source rather than the external act. Some groups use the worker as a servant during this period to catch their balls, to drive them around in a car, and to get them things they could not have otherwise. These situations help the worker to diagnose the group and to build understanding of what is required of him in developing sound relationships. From them, he learns something about the value system, the internal structure and activity interests, and the acceptance or rejection of authority symbols by the group.

During these exploratory and fact gathering contacts, a relationship begins to develop. The next step in the process is not discernible as an entity but blends into the living fabric of the group as a whole. The treatment process is started almost imperceptibly. From the point of view of the group, the elements are not recognizable or distinct. The worker is simply a "good guy" or "He's on 'our side.'"

From the point of view of the worker, he is using the social group work method in a new setting where extra sensitivity and imagination are required. He analyzes the group in terms of (1) member roles, (2) status-producing behavior, (3) communication devices, (4) cohesive forces, (5) leadership figures, (6) subgroupings, (7) values and standards, (8) decision-making processes, (9) intra-group conflicts, (10) esprit-de-corps and factors that influence contagion of behavior.

He also studies individuals in relation to their: (1) developmental levels, (2) character traits, (3) attitudes, (4) tensions, fears, and frustrations, (5) acceptance-rejection patterns toward peers and adults, (6) self-images and defense mechanisms, (7) concepts of family and community, (8) personal history, especially in relation to law enforcement and corrections, (9) interests and goals.

During every phase of the process of observing and assessing the group, he suggests program activities that will contribute to reach-

ing his diagnostic and treatment goals and the interests of the members. These suggestions and the way he participates in the life of the group are governed by a few paramount principles.

First of all he is a representative of adult society and he is obligated to uphold the code of ethics to which he subscribes as a member and representative of a law-abiding, democratic community. He knows that the code is imperfectly practiced. He also knows that the code was evolved over a long period of time and that it can be changed, but only by the efforts of people who can understand it and restrain their judgment while they work for change. The worker becomes the bearer of values to youngsters who have pretty good "hunches" about what is right and what is wrong but they want their "hunches" corroborated by an adult in whom they trust.

The second principle is that the worker sets limits and sticks by them. If such limits are interpreted objectively and enforced impersonally, yet consistently, the group members sense the conviction behind them and develop a feeling of steadfast support. They feel that the worker is saying, "I like you but I don't always like what you do. I meant it when I said I'd do everything I could to help you but if I can't get your cooperation then I can't help. If I know you have a gun, I'll have to call the police. If you have, use, or sell narcotics, I must inform the police. But, if you honestly try to change, I'll understand and we'll work things out together."

The street club worker transmits his values and sets limits in a way that makes him different from other adults these youngsters have known. The worker is a "different" adult—one who represents something strong and solid. He has no need to punish them, to make them feel small, or to change them into replicas of himself.

The conference participants agreed that program is an important part of the treatment process. Here the worker functions as an enabler. He helps the group to participate in activities that they would not attempt without his support. Sometimes members say that they abhor athletic games but, in the protected atmosphere that the worker tries to achieve, their resistances give way and they dare to do the things they have belittled. Team sports may not always be the best place to begin because the group may not be able to handle internal competition, to say nothing of external competition. However, individual pursuits that lead to building up physical strength and technical skills are good starting points. Team sports come when healthy esprit-de-corps has developed.

Trips around the community to interesting sections and eventually to historical spots are other program possibilities. Workers say that the group's motives for embarking on such trips may not always coincide with theirs. Nevertheless, the group, once it is exposed to ideas and places outside the tight and isolated neighborhood in which

it operates, begins to feel that it is less rejected and even respected in the community. The members are a little flattered by the worker's inference that they would like to do what "other kids" do.

Camping trips have been quite successful, especially if they involve travel and the adventure of boating, fishing, and rugged outdoor living. The conferees cautioned though about the fears this experience can generate for youngsters who know their way around in "metropolitan jungles" but are scared silly by the night sounds in the woods. The most valuable aspects of such trips are the advanced planning required, the sharing of responsibility and equipment, and the mutual dependency and support growing out of this type of activity. This kind of activity is particularly valuable to the worker because of the twenty-four hour contact it gives him with the members and the depth of understanding he derives from this intensive experience with them. In addition, such trips give him an opportunity to demonstrate abilities in a field where the members may not be proficient. If they have ever thought of him as "chicken" when he would not participate in antisocial acts in the city, they now see him as a tower of strength and daring in a situation where they are less sure of themselves.

Bit by bit the ego strength of the individuals and the group as a whole is built up through these common experiences. Slowly assurance is increased and this finally leads to other program pursuits that interest most adolescents. Mechanical tinkering can move from a program interest to vocational preparation. Car clubs that were formed by teen-agers for the purpose of stealing parts of cars and even whole autos, have been redirected into mechanical clinics which prepared the members for employment. Because such activities require the cooperation of more adults than just the worker, the beginning of constructive relationships with the broader community is started. Persons who have been looked upon as "squares" or dupes are now seen in a different light. The bridge to the community is off the drawing board and beginning to take shape.

Discussions on subjects that interest the members go on during club meetings, on trips, at camp. Often they are informal and casual but they tip off the worker on interests and resources that may be useful at certain points in the treatment process. A sensitive, ingenious worker stores away these kernels of knowledge and when he judges that conditions are propitious, he brings them out, singly or in pairs and they too, become program elements. When the subject is beyond his competence and he feels that the group can "take" an outsider, he paves the way and brings in another person who contributes knowledge and, perhaps of greater importance, strengthens the bridge to life in the community.

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Thus the worker performs three major roles—bearer of values, setter of limits, and enabler. Most of his work is concentrated on serving the group as a whole and individual members within the group. But the worker's enabling function is broader than the confines of the group because he is not always equipped to give all of the required service. Referral to specialized counseling and treatment programs is also a part of the enabling function. Group members often belong to families that are difficulty-prone. Adolescents from such families need more help than the worker can hope to provide through satisfactory, socially-oriented group experiences with peers. Perhaps other family members require counseling services and intensive treatment. Even the total family may need help. When these conditions exist, the worker is responsible for locating services to meet them and extending his enabling function to helping his client and possibly the client's family to use them.

Concurrent with his treatment program, the worker constantly evaluates how the group and its members are moving toward the goal of improved social adjustment in the community. Before the process started, he had selected criteria for measuring progress. He uses these to measure progress from the initial conditions of maladjustment to evidence of ability to live in the community as a participating, constructive member of society.

The group worker's professional competence is tested by his ability to determine when treatment should end. By this time the group has confidence in him. Severing the comfortable bond of affection, trust, and support is difficult but necessary for the group and the worker, since the treatment goal was much broader than social adjustment within the group. There has not been a great deal of recorded experience in this phase of the process due to the fact no doubt that so many programs have not yet reached this stage.

The conference participants could agree on the following principles drawn from experience in working with all kinds of groups: (1) Preparation for termination or transfer should be a conscious effort on the part of the worker and the group; (2) the agency or worker from which the subsequent service will come, should be intimately involved in the process so that the transfer is not too abrupt or traumatic. This means that the agency and the worker should receive as much information as possible about the group and its individual members; the new agency and worker should give evidence of accepting the responsibility for helping the group to handle future adjustment problems if they should occur.

The final phase in the termination process—*follow-up*—consists of the street club worker conferring with the new worker and the new agency to which the group has been transferred for continuing

service. On occasion the new worker will find it helpful to observe the group in operation.

If the group does not choose to affiliate with a structured program or an established agency, the evaluation process should indicate readiness and competence on the part of the group to function independently. In either case, follow-up is extremely important because the hard-won confidence and the relationships developed during the course of the total process should not be lost. If the worker abruptly stops having contact with the group, he may convey to the members of the group the feeling that his previous concern and interest were artificial or insincere. Since a major problem of the members stems from a sense that the adult world rejects them, the termination process is fraught with dangers. Thus the worker must achieve a delicate balance in providing opportunities for self-determination while he assures the group of his continued interest and concern. He is honestly proud of the strong relationships that have developed through the joint efforts of himself, the group, and other citizens of the community. But he wants to be sure that these are strong enough to sustain this strain.
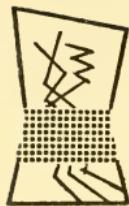
 the worker [3]

Success in serving hostile youth groups is not found in a type of building, a program of activities, or even a set of techniques. The prime essential is the worker and his relationships with the group.

What makes the worker so special? He does a new type of job in an unusual setting. Few people understand what he does and some even question its effectiveness. Working conditions, particularly hours of work, are completely different than in the usual social work position. The worker has less security and support from the agency. He must be able to make decisions independently and often without time for deliberation or opportunity to confer with his supervisor. The physical, mental and emotional hazards are far greater.

The conferees were not in complete agreement as to the most desirable preparation for the worker. Most of them thought that the best educational background for the worker was training in a school of social work with a specialization in group work.

But fully trained social group workers are in short supply for a whole gamut of social work positions. Schools of social work are geared to preparing students for the field of social work rather than for positions in specialized settings. Thus, they said, it was impossible to require that this kind of worker be a fully trained social group worker.

Although one group of agencies employs only persons with graduate social work training, other agencies with several years of experience in employing and supervising street club workers say that what the worker brings to the job in terms of his personal philosophy, attitudes, emotional stability and previous experience that are inventoried here are more important than formal training:

YOUTH . . . . . . The worker should be young enough to be able to "take" the demands of the job yet old enough to

[3] Working materials for this section were prepared by a committee of workers in New York City.

have developed sound judgment and a well-defined ethical code. He needs to be energetic and vigorous enough to be able to keep up with adolescents. Since he is helping to bridge a gap between generations and cultures, he should possess the combination of an outward identification with youth but inwardly he must be a well organized, intelligent, sympathetic, secure adult.

HEALTH . . . . . He should be physically, mentally, and emotionally healthy.

1. Long work hours and interrupted leisure make heavy demands on his physical health and strength. The rigors of his job demand unusual stamina and ability to "bounce back." Jokingly, someone said that the worker must have a strong stomach if he is to consume the vast quantities of coffee, cokes and hot dogs that are part of the early process of getting acquainted with youth groups.

2. The worker must be intellectually competent and have an ability to handle conceptual material. Intellectual curiosity, knowledge of of the cultural milieu in which he is working and an understanding of the major culture and youth subcultures in the community are imperative. Along with an awareness of the legal framework of society, the worker must have factual knowledge of pertinent laws and recognize that additional information may have to be secured at times. The process of working with hostile groups should be so familiar to him that it is a part of him—it is "in his muscles."

3. The worker's emotional health is a prime factor in his ability to do his job. He has a healthy acceptance of reality in relation to his own life and that of other people. He accepts the fact that conflicts in value systems exist and that they can be resolved. The worker must be able to handle his own and the group members' attitudes toward authority and authority figures. He must have "worked through" his attitudes about sex and

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be able to help group members do this too. He should possess moral and ethical integrity without being authoritarian or moralistic. He should have a reasonable degree of confidence about his own status in society.

ADAPTABILITY . The worker's well-laid plans and mapped-out schedules often have to be changed unexpectedly. He should have a reserve of alternate plans and be able to "roll with the punches."

PATIENCE . . . . The worker has to be content with seeing progress over a long period of time. He is not in this effort for himself but for the sake of hurt, frustrated, hostile youth. He concentrates on helping them to understand their own problems and develop motivation to make the necessary changes in their own attitudes and behavior. Concurrent with this, he will have to be aware of and convinced that society may have to adapt somewhat too. This job combines mastery of education and treatment skills which are seldom easy and never simple or direct.

IMAGINATION . . The worker has to be imaginative if he is to be successful in redirecting the behavior of street clubs and gangs. His previous experiences may have differed markedly from those of the club members. Therefore he needs the capacity to feel with the group members without becoming one of them. Some organizations have had success in using former gang members as workers while others feel that such close identification is unwise. In any event, imagination and creativity of approach are imperative.

MOTIVATION . . The worker should feel a sort of dedication to his task which stems from an honest conviction that by working with the good in every person, improved behavior can result. He should be able to see some of the "beauty" in the rawness of street life and be able to let this help to sustain him in crises. He should be challenged by the job and enjoy the excitement of being in the middle of things without being trapped into a

close identification with the hostility toward the larger society which the group members feel.

WARMTH . . . . . The worker needs the warm, outgoing qualities which appeal to other people generally. In the early stages of establishing contacts with hostile youth groups, an ability to inspire confidence and trust is the worker's most powerful tool for breaking down hostility and fear.

Interspersed through the recorders' notes are many comments about the roles the worker plays and the typical tasks he performs. However there is very little summation of what he does and only a few detailed job descriptions are available. We are inclined to agree with one note which says, "A widely supported comment was to the effect that what the worker does with the hard-to-reach group is, at this stage, a very sparsely documented area."

Here are some typical tasks:

With the group and its members

The worker contacts the group in its natural setting and begins to establish relationships with individual members and the group as a whole.

He uses these relationships to help him assess the character of group life, the existing problems, and the degree of alienation from the community.

He develops opportunities which will provide a wide variety of interaction so that the members will be able to find a level of comfortable relationship with him.

He suggests and helps to carry out activities which will help the group to have fun and enjoy constructive experiences.

He helps the group members to accumulate a long series of experiences with community agencies, resources, and individuals in the hope that these will lead to new and different perceptions of the community.

Outside the group

With families

In establishing relationships with group members the worker uncovers information about family background and problems of parents and siblings. Many family situations are important factors in diagnosing the problems of group members.

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They also contribute to developing realistic treatment plans. Across the country opinions differ as to the worker's responsibility for making any sort of contact with the families of group members. In some projects the worker has no contact with the family while in others group members ask the worker to visit their homes. Sometimes the parents themselves seek out the worker for conferences.

In the main, the worker performs no treatment roles with parents or other members of the family. His role is that of interpreter and mediator. Should he discover that the family as a whole or individual members of it need and want services, he has the responsibility for locating the necessary service and making a referral.

The worker's contacts with the family, particularly parents, should be structured and purposeful. He operates on the principle that it is wiser to contact parents in positive terms rather than when there is a crisis. Although family or parental contacts are kept to a minimum, he realizes that parental influences are powerful in the lives of group members.

With the immediate neighborhood

One of the worker's most important tasks lies in enlisting the cooperation of adults in the neighborhood, individual citizens, and representatives of community groups and insituations. The corner druggist, the cafe proprietor, the theater manager, neighbors, the police officer in the precinct, school and social agency personnel soon become aware of his presence and are interested or curious about what he is doing. The worker cannot hope to reach his goal of helping to bridge the gap between youth subcultures and the major culture of the community without these people. How he does this and the timing of his efforts depend upon the local situation and the administrative structure in which he operates. Again documentation is scarce. During the conference participants agreed that this is the community organization aspect of the job and requires considerable skill on the part of the worker.

Techniques that have been used with some success are—

1. Working with and through a local committee made up of business men, interested citizens, and representatives of social agencies, schools, churches, and law enforcement personnel. If no such committee exists, the worker may have to see that one is created. If it does exist, he may find it effective to work intimately with the subcommittee.

2. In addition to the fairly formal structure mentioned above, the worker should seek out the same types of people on a casual basis and open up informal communication channels.

With official law enforcement agencies

The conferees generated considerable heat and shed some light on the subject of cooperation between law enforcement personnel and street club workers. The street club worker, like any other person who serves a client, must be discreet in the use he makes of information his client gives him in the course of treatment. Workers have been clearer about their responsibility to the group than they have been about their responsibility to society. Although social workers and law enforcement personnel in some instances have worked out agreements which take into account the delicate balance that the worker must maintain between his responsibilities to his clients and to society, street club workers have not always operated in this way.

By the very nature of the behavior which creates the need for his service, the street club worker is caught in the middle of an unsolved problem. Often law enforcement officials perceive the worker as an extremely suspicious character because he appears to be entering the domain of the police without first establishing cooperative relationships with officials who have been assigned very specific, legally constituted duties. A systematic overcoming of these built-in hazards to maintaining confidentiality and supporting law enforcement has been tackled in only a few of the communities around the country. Instead, on occasion police officers have developed their own programs to serve street clubs and gangs; and street club workers have sometimes withheld information about criminal acts of their group members. Between these two extremes lie some creative and exciting operational designs for cooperation and mutual trust. These seem to occur most often when a city-wide project to serve groups of hostile youth has central coordination and well-defined procedures that were developed at top levels in the community, tested at the local level, revised and improved on the basis of experience, and kept alive by continuous communication and review.

The nine representatives of law enforcement who attended this conference made a tremendous contribution to the discussions on confidentiality and did much to build trust and

esteem for their function in this endeavor on behalf of youth groups.

Perhaps the most we can say here is that the worker must follow whatever policy his agency sets on this issue. If none exists, he should initiate action by requesting that a policy be developed and provide information to substantiate the need for it. Only through more cooperative effort and sharing of ideas will the gap between street club workers and law enforcement personnel finally be closed.
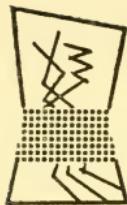
a view of administration

A wide variety of patterns for providing services to groups of aggressive youth was represented at this conference. They ranged from single agencies with "detached workers" through groups of agencies that cooperate to serve street clubs and juvenile gangs within a selected geographical area of a city, to a city-wide program of services with a central administration. Often services to groups are but one part of a broadly based, multi-function program. In many cases the responsibility for central administration is vested in the local welfare council with numerous approaches for carrying out group services.

An over-all view of these administrative structures resembles a skyline of tall towers, middle-sized buildings, and tiny dwellings. Each has been built according to specifications which seemed to fit the needs of the local community. To determine which structure is best for a given community is difficult. But the conference participants tried to pull out principles which would be helpful.

First of all they said that a carefully conceived and soundly built administrative structure was essential. This structure must be built upon well-defined objectives and delegated authority the source for which is the community. Responsibility for a wide variety of functions related to these services is vested in numerous institutions and organizations within the community. Only through integration of the philosophies and services of these community agencies with authority and responsibility for this problem can a consistent attack be made.

Upon this foundation, policy, clarification of functions, financial support, interpretation, selection and supervision of staff, and study or evaluation are based.

Some of the structures for serving youth groups in conflict are beginning to lean a little—perhaps because their framework was erected hastily in the midst of community concern that sometimes reached hysterical proportions. The people attending the confer-

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ences, coming as they did from programs that represented all types of structures, used the final working group sessions to analyze administrative problems. Their discussion began around the working brief prepared by Marjorie W. Main, Coordinator of the Unreached Youth Project of the Welfare Federation of Cleveland, Ohio.

Regarding the foundation, they said: Far too often the service has been initiated before the people in the community had enough understanding of the problem to recognize that changes in both the adolescent and adult cultures were inherent in any mediation between the two. Positive community attitudes and relationships are essential to any agency service. Since youth groups in conflict represent a psychological and physical threat to the security of the community, this understanding is difficult to achieve but fundamental to success. Four aspects of this question require somewhat different approaches:

1. Inherent in the process of serving the group is the job of creating a community climate which permits change to take place in the attitudes and behavior of the group. Whether community attitudes are a primary cause of group conflict, or a secondary or reinforcing factor, the community is both a client and a partner in the process.

2. When agencies undertake this kind of service, they must safeguard their traditional and primary function and interpret the new service to the total clientele of the agency and the supporting community. This may mean a clarification of the basic harmony of this service with the agency purpose, despite apparent differences in methods employed and value frameworks. Or this service may suggest a new and broader purpose for the agency that the clientele and the community must be helped to understand.

3. Services, agencies, and professional persons who are appropriately concerned with members of these groups need clear understanding of the function and role of the worker and the scope and limits of the responsibility he assumes in his contact with the group.

4. The public, and the financially supporting groups, need to be kept abreast of the nature of these services, the problems involved, and the evidence of progress or success.

Regarding the structural framework, they said: Operational patterns and traditional procedures and methods regarding intake, use of facilities, hours of work for staff, and community organization

may have to be modified or even changed radically.

Regarding financing, they said: Providing services to groups of antisocial youth is expensive.

It costs more to employ the workers who have personal and professional qualifications to do a good job. Salary scales differ from community to community but, in general, street club workers can and do command salaries somewhat higher than the usual run of workers with the same or similar training.

To do their work they need an auto—preferably a station wagon—to get around in the neighborhood and to transport their groups. In addition they need funds to operate the car.

Program equipment for athletics, quiet games and parties should be available for the exclusive use of the street club worker. When he needs an equipment item for his group, it is difficult—even impossible at times—to postpone the activity because of the explosive nature of the group. Therefore the worker cannot depend on the usual stock of such equipment that the agency maintains.

Street club workers also need a fund on which they can draw for payment of broken equipment, window glass and other minor breakages.

In current practice the major budget items covering salaries and general administrative costs are supplied by Community Chests, private foundations or public funds from State and city governments. Service clubs often give money to purchase station wagons and even to provide special meeting facilities in store-front buildings. The youth groups themselves are involved in paying for as much of the program expenses as possible. Usually they can pay for gasoline for the cars provided for their use and some other program expenses.

The serious question of how long private funds can continue to bear the complete expense of this kind of service to hostile youth groups was discussed in each working group at the conference. The consensus was that once the experimental aspects of this service are completed, agencies should be able to draw upon both private and public funds for continuing the service as long as it is needed.

Regarding staff, they said: Although serving youth groups in conflict with their communities is a service oriented to social work, the supply of social group workers is so limited that it may be necessary to employ staff with other kinds of training for work with these youth. However, these workers should be supervised by fully-trained and experienced social workers.

Workers' schedules should be set up with flexible hours of work that allow for discretion and judgment in determining when they

do what. But the number of groups each worker serves should be small enough to give him time to write his group records, participate in staff meetings, and do all of the "fringe work" that is part of this type of job.

Regarding the future, they said: Schools of social work can help to train their students to fill the increasing number of jobs of this sort by helping them to achieve greater depth of understanding about human growth and development, increased awareness of community cultures and how to work within them, and improved skills in community organization and research.

Extending services to "hard-to-serve" youth groups has brought into focus the need for social agencies and law enforcement units of local government to develop greater understanding of each other's functions and to learn how to work together cooperatively. A recommendation that the Children's Bureau address itself to this problem was made at the final general session.

More and better research should be included in new projects that may be developed in the future. For those projects that are operating now some sort of research emphasis can still be injected although it is desirable that a research design should be part of the preliminary planning. Regardless of when the research is begun, the research staff should work with the street club workers, the administrator, and other people concerned with the service as team members.
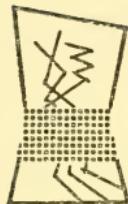
*the conference
in retrospect* [4]

There have been waves of concern and cycles of planning for service to youth groups in difficulty. Group workers have "swayed and still sway" in determining what their aims and methods should be. They have come to see that the problems they are attacking extend beyond the question of whether they are working in behalf of groups or in behalf of individuals in groups. They are aware of the "senselessness of over-propagating the truly exciting chances for learning and service that lie in programs for hard-to-reach youth groups."

The values of these undertakings are, undoubtedly in pioneering, experimentation, and research. "Once this is fully recognized, the workers have a tool in hand that may profoundly affect the service concepts and criteria for planning." "The emphasis upon the limitations is a compelling necessity; all elements in the projects, the learning, the experimental nature of these undertakings, need to be strengthened so that we will not fall prey to the notion that another miracle has been found, and that it can be had by letting anyone play around with it."

Much of the time was spent in talking about the community, "that precarious shelter for youth groups in difficulty." The term, community, came alive when it was described as the "aggregate of all that lives and works and plays and worries about youth groups—all that is annoyed by or annoying to youth groups—all that cares for or neglects them because of, or in spite of, the interdependency between the old and the young."

The participants looked at the community and at hostile youth groups in an "improving" way. They spoke of groups being used "to make values," "to create a new subculture" whose "ways offer tailor-made solutions to adjustment problems," "to offer activities that have meaning to the members."

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[4] This section is based on the remarks at the closing session of William H. Brueckner, Executive Director, Chicago Commons Association.

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They were concerned with the need "to rearrange agency relationships to youth groups." They went far beyond designing new and more effective techniques "in an honest effort to reach deeply into the task of helping to find workable and sustained links between disappointed, annoyed and annoying, distrusting youth groups and the adult community." One of the reasons for this was to probe into the community's readiness to see the problem properly, or—at least— readiness to be helped to see it. "Some of us have contributed to the drowning of the community's chance to understand, by improper dramatization, by allowing the word 'crime' to be used more often than the words 'child' or 'youth.' . . . And, in other instances, we fell, understandably, into a condition of sensation and excitement, speaking of alarm and emergency, disaster and task force, roving and detached hero figures, disguised inquirers, the Supermen and Mighty Mice, whom we would all like to resemble at one time or another. . . . We worried about ourselves, our agencies, the validity of the circle of concepts, the soundness of our general and specific approaches."

The worker, what he should be, what equipment he needed, and how he should approach his work and his clientele stood in the middle of often dramatic debate. The heart of the service is the individual worker; the relationship between the worker and the group is the key tool. Many skills and the understandings of many professional people may be used through supervision and consultation. "The worker is not a paratrooper letting himself down into ugly uncertainty, not followed by a well-equipped mobile service unit of analysts, teams of skills, and possibly with representatives of an indigenous parent organization in a trailer. The worker must know a lot about the area in which he is to work, he must have the support of other people with knowledge and skills that are broader and larger than his own. The total community must back him too, because now it seems clear that the aim of "modification of behavior" pertains to adults as well as to youth, and that these agencies are the arms of adult society.

"Occasionally, the term 'modification of agency behavior' was used to show the need to discuss the 'other side of the coin.' What was meant was not only that all of us have to learn to do a better job, to be ready to be more flexible but that all of us need to recognize that we are not exempt from the fate that may befall any institution. We know we have become much better than we were, we know more about human beings, we begin to know more about this word, community, but we are also arms and symbols of the adult world that has and is still creating this gap that makes us talk about hard-to-reach youth groups. And our concerns for the causes of it cannot be substituted for by designing some technical bridges which we may cross but which youth groups may not want to use unless there is enough reason for trust and comfort."

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Executive Secretary of the
Group Work Council of the
Cleveland Welfare Federation
Mr. William H. Brueckner
Executive Director of Chicago
Commons Association

Dr. Albert K. Cohen
Assistant Professor at Indiana
University
Mrs. Elliot Studt
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of Juvenile Delinquency Service,
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Leadership of working groups

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Mr. Daniel R. Bernstein	Harrisburg, Pennsylvania
Miss Ruth C. Pease	Syracuse, New York

GROUP II

Mr. James E. McCarthy	New York, New York
Miss Claudia Grant	Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Mr. Saul B. Bernstein	Boston, Massachusetts

GROUP III

Miss Marjorie W. Main	Cleveland, Ohio
Mr. Irving Spergel	New York, New York
Mr. Evelio Grillo	Oakland, California

GROUP IV

Miss Marjorie Murphy	Washington, D. C.
Mr. G. Elwood Saunders	Los Angeles, California
Mr. Richard J. Parvis	Minneapolis, Minnesota

GROUP V

Mr. William Schwartz	Chicago, Illinois
Mrs. Lillian C. Lampkin	New York, New York
Mr. William E. Barr	Washington, D. C.

GROUP VI

Mr. Jack Stumpf	Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Mr. Thomas F. Hansen	Minneapolis, Minnesota
Miss Elizabeth Jones	Memphis, Tennessee

GROUP VII

Mr. Mitchell Ginsberg	New York, New York
Mr. Ralph Fertig	Chicago, Illinois
Mrs. Elizabeth Fajen	Cleveland, Ohio

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Mr. William E. Barr, Washington

Mr. Milton A. Brown, New York

Mr. William Brueckner, Chicago

Mr. Howard G. Gibbs, New York

Mr. Mitchell Ginsberg, New York

Mr. Evelio Grillo, Oakland

Mr. Russell Hogrefe, Chicago

Mr. Hugh Johnson, New York

Mr. Emeric Kurtagh, Detroit

Mr. Gordon Manser, Baltimore

Approximately 200 people from 22 States attended. Of this total, nearly 50 percent were workers with groups of hostile youth and their immediate supervisors; 40 percent were agency executives, welfare planners and faculty from schools of social work; the remainder came from police departments, departments of public welfare, housing authorities, the courts, churches, public schools, and other community sources.

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Mr. JESSE YBARRA
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